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OPINION

STREET-CLEANING

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OPINION  
OF THE  
MEDICAL PROFESSION  
ON THE CONDITION AND NEEDS OF THE  
CITY OF NEW YORK,  
IN REGARD TO  
STREET-CLEANING.

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*Expressed in a Mass Meeting of the Physicians of the City, held at  
Chickering Hall, Wednesday, April 13, 1881.*

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*The Members of the Medical Profession and the friends of Sanitary Reform are invited to attend a Meeting at CHICKERING HALL, on Wednesday Evening, April 13th, at eight o'clock.*

The object of this meeting is to urge upon the Legislature the immediate passage of "The Citizens' Bill," as it came from the Senate, as a means of relieving our city from present and impending danger on account of its neglected and dirty streets. Their condition is one of the causes of the notoriously unhealthy state of New York at this time.

A petition signed by more than two hundred and fifty physicians has been disregarded. It was not even presented to the Legislature by the member having it in charge.

Let us now make a demand for immediate legislation which shall remove one of New York's greatest evils.

A. E. M. PURDY, M.D.

RICHARD H. DERBY, M.D.

D. B. ST. JOHN ROOSA, M.D.

F. LEROY SATTERLEE, M.D.

JOHN T. METCALFE, M.D.

J. C. DALTON, M.D.

(Exclusive of the last paragraph but one.)

J. L. LITTLE, M.D.

AUSTIN FLINT, M.D.

W. H. DRAPER, M.D.

T. GAILLARD THOMAS, M.D.

C. FAYETTE TAYLOR, M.D.

W. M. CHAMBERLAIN, M.D.

EVERETT HERRICK, M.D.

THOMAS ADDIS EMMET, M.D.

CHARLES S. BULL, M.D.

C. E. BILLINGTON, M.D.

JOHN C. PETERS, M.D.

SENECA D. POWELL, M.D.

J. W. WRIGHT, M.D.

E. L. KEYES, M.D.

EDWARD T. ELY, M.D.

A. DuBOIS, M.D.

T. M. MARKOE, M.D.

CHARLES S. WARD, M.D.

F. R. STURGIS, M.D.

L. DUNCAN BULKLEY, M.D.

FRANCIS DELAFIELD, M.D.

GEORGE M. LEFFERTS, M.D.

AUSTIN FLINT, JR., M.D.

FORDYCE BARKER, M.D., LL.D.

FRANK H. HAMILTON, M.D., LL.D.

GEORGE A. PETERS, M.D.

WILLARD PARKER, M.D.

LEWIS A. SAYRE, M.D.

ALFRED L. LOOMIS, M.D.

HENRY D. NOYES, M.D.

ALLAN McLANE HAMILTON, M.D.

ALFRED C. POST, M.D., LL.D.

J. W. S. GOULEY, M.D.

ANDREW H. SMITH, M.D.

WILLIAM H. THOMSON, M.D.

EDW. G. LORING, M.D.

F. C. RILEY, M.D.

H. KNAPP, M.D.

E. C. SEGUIN, M.D.

A. CLARK, M.D.

W. M. CARPENTER, M.D.

T. E. SATTERTHWAITE, M.D.

R. F. WEIR, M.D.

H. B. SANDS, M.D.

JOHN H. HINTON, M.D.

A. JACOBI, M.D.

PETER A. CALLAN, M.D.

F. N. OTIS, M.D.

SAMUEL SEXTON, M.D.

CHARLES INSLEE PARDEE, M.D.

MEREDITH CLYMER, M.D.

BEVERLEY ROBINSON, M.D.

G. S. WINSTON, M.D.

And many others.



# MASS MEETING OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

OF THE

## CITY OF NEW YORK.

CHICKERING HALL, April 13, 1881.

The meeting was called to order by Dr. THOMAS M. MARKOE, who nominated Dr. WILLARD PARKER as President. Dr. PARKER was duly elected, and upon taking the chair he called upon Dr. WOOLSEY JOHNSON to read the list of Secretaries, and the following gentlemen were elected :

### SECRETARIES.

A. H. BUCK, M.D.  
GEORGE M. LEFFERTS, M.D.  
PETER A. CALLAN, M.D.  
EDWARD T. ELY, M.D.

WESLEY M. CARPENTER, M.D.  
C. E. BILLINGTON, M.D.  
BACHE McE. EMMET, M.D.  
LUCIUS D. BULKLEY, M.D.

Dr. HENRY D. NOYES nominated the following gentlemen as Vice-Presidents, and they were elected :

### VICE-PRESIDENTS.

JAMES ANDERSON, M.D.  
ALFRED C. POST, M.D., LL.D.  
S. S. PURPLE, M.D.  
ABRAM DuBOIS, M.D.  
AUSTIN FLINT, M.D.  
JOHN T. MELCALFE, M.D.  
LEWIS A. SAYRE, M.D.  
JOHN C. DRAPER, M.D.  
A. E. M. PURDY, M.D.  
HENRY D. NOYES, M.D.  
ABRAHAM JACOBI, M.D.  
EDWARD W. LAMBERT, M.D.  
R. J. O'SULLIVAN, M.D.  
F. N. OTIS, M.D.  
C. P. RUSSELL, M.D.  
HENRY B. SANDS, M.D.  
ADOLPH KESSLER, M.D.  
JOHN A. WYETH, M.D.  
GEORGE A. PETERS, M.D.  
BEVERLEY ROBINSON, M.D.  
F. D. WEISSE, M.D.  
CHARLES E. HACKLEY, M.D.  
FRANCIS DELAFIELD, M.D.  
CHARLES H. ALDEN, M.D.  
FORDYCE BARKER, M.D.  
SALVATORE CARO, M.D.  
JOHN C. DALTON, M.D.  
FRANK P. FOSTER, M.D.  
WILLIAM A. HAMMOND, M.D.  
MEREDITH CLYMER, M.D.  
CLINTON WAGNER, M.D.  
JAMES L. BANKS, M.D.  
JARED LINSLEY, M.D.  
E. G. LORING, M.D.

FRANK H. HAMILTON, M.D., LL.D.  
ALLAN McLANE HAMILTON, M.D.  
JAMES R. LEAMING, M.D.  
THOMAS A. MCPARLIN, M.D.  
ALONZO CLARK, M.D.  
WILLIAM T. LUSK, M.D.  
WOOLSEY JOHNSON, M.D.  
JAMES L. LITTLE, M.D.  
WILLIAM T. BULL, M.D.  
EDWARD CURTIS, M.D.  
THOMAS C. FINNELL, M.D.  
EVERETT HERRICK, M.D.  
JOHN G. CURTIS, M.D.  
J. W. S. GOULEY, M.D.  
HENRY D. NICOLL, M.D.  
F. M. WELD, M.D.  
C. I. PARDEE, M.D.  
F. LEROY SATTERLEE, M.D.  
JOHN C. PETERS, M.D.  
GEORGE G. WHEELOCK, M.D.  
T. E. SATTERTHWAITE, M.D.  
HOWARD PINKNEY, M.D.  
C. S. WARD, M.D.  
EDWARD L. KEYES, M.D.  
ALFRED L. LOOMIS, M.D.  
THOMAS M. MARKOE, M.D.  
ELLSWORTH ELIOT, M.D.  
THOMAS ADDIS EMMET, M.D.  
AUSTIN FLINT, JR., M.D.  
JOHN H. HINTON, M.D.  
WILLIAM M. CHAMBERLAIN, M.D.  
GEORGE M. BEARD, M.D.  
JOSEPH W. HOWE, M.D.  
WILLIAM H. DRAPER, M.D.

## DR. PARKER'S ADDRESS.

When these gentlemen were declared elected, the president, DR. WILLARD PARKER, said :

*Fellow-Citizens and Brethren of the Medical Profession*—The purpose of this meeting I suppose you in a measure already apprehend. The meeting of course belongs, in a measure, to the profession. Those who are here, as well as those who are not here, are united in the object that we have in view, and that is to have our city in a healthy condition, to have our streets clean, and all that is inimical to health in our midst entirely subdued. It is generally understood that the streets of our city are in a very filthy condition, and that this has a very serious influence upon the health and well-being of this community. In order to realize this, in some degree, we may simply look at the tables of death-rates. The number of deaths occurring in 1880, in January, February, and March, was 6,900 ; in the same months of the year 1881 the number was 9,200, showing an increase of something like forty or fifty per cent. This was a very large increase, and should be the cause of a great deal of apprehension on the part of our citizens, and of the deepest and most anxious thought on the part of the profession, for it should be remembered that it is a profession that stands as a bulwark against disease and death on the one side, and the health of the community on the other. This whole matter seems now to have reached a culminating point, as our death-rate has increased so enormously, to say nothing of the people who are feeling ill. It seems to me that there cannot be an individual within the limits of the city who breathes the atmosphere of our streets, who has not been more or less affected, unhealthily, thereby. It is impossible for you to breathe an impure atmosphere and be healthy ; that you may lay down as a fundamental proposition. Now, when the Citizens' bill was put in the hands of the Assembly, it was allowed to slumber there for, I think, ten days. This delay was caused by a desire to take the political power that is in it and give it to another

political party. For this purpose a gentleman was named who declined to be so made use of, and declined absolutely. I refer to Professor Chandler. (Loud applause.) I rejoiced to see him show that wisdom, although it was only what I expected of him. Then there has been a movement made to originate another commission, which would only be another four or five-headed monster, which would give the nominating power to the Mayor and the appointment and the approval thereof to the Board of Health. Now, the Citizens' Committee want no such change. Let us have one man and let him be responsible. (Applause.) What we want, then, is to have our bill carried through; that is what the citizens of New York want, and that is what the profession of medicine desire. They want the streets to be clean, so that the city may be clean, that we may have this fearful danger of disease, this breeding of disease, removed from our midst.

It must be understood that in a few days we shall have the heat of summer upon us, and the effect of that will be fearful. It is well to inquire what we will do in such a case. In 1849 the last visitation of cholera broke out on the 17th of May. We have only from now to then to get this city cleaned—that is, we have only one month. If the heated weather were to come, there never were so many factors for producing disease, at one time, as there are now. We want, then, a power to act at once. We have already indications of pestilence. The severe winter has enervated us, for we always find after a severe winter that we have a great deal of sickness. It is because the nervous system is so enervated by the pressure of winter that the conditions are found favorable to an outbreak of pestilence, if there is accompanied therewith a cause for pestilence. In the present circumstances of our city I think that the conditions are favorable for such an outbreak in our midst. If this should be the case, it is impossible for me to say what the effect will be. Great guilt will be at the door of some one. I will not call it murder; I cannot call it manslaughter. It is killing, and you may call it what you choose. To guard this city against a pestilential invasion is of the

first importance, for this city is a sort of key to the outside world. Pestilence or cholera is famous for travelling in broad highways, and if you have cholera it will be impossible to hedge it in this city alone, for it will travel along the States, find its way to New Jersey and the New England States, and thus disseminate itself over every part of the Union. The number of deaths in 1832 from cholera was about twenty thousand; in 1849 the number was about fourteen thousand. Prevention is better than cure, and, so far as the profession of a medical man is concerned, it is better for his pockets that there should be a healthy community, for every man in sound health needs the counsel of a doctor to tell him how to keep it. (Applause.) No one can tell what the effect will be of pestilence induced here by the culpability of somebody. What will you be able to do when this number of deaths is so largely increased and sickness is so prevalent, and who is going to supply the millions of dollars that will be lost in business and the deprivation of labor consequent on this probable sickness and death? This is an exceedingly grave subject, and I feel strongly, therefore, in favor of the one-man power. (Loud applause.) I then know where the authority is, and I know that the people have the power to invest individuals with this power, or they may delegate it to one individual. I trust, however, that we shall now accomplish our purpose and carry through to ultimate legislation this bill, which is approved by the inhabitants of this great city, and which is known to all of us as "the Citizens' bill."

I take pleasure in introducing one of our most distinguished members, the President of the Academy, a gentleman interested in everything that works for the good of the community—PROFESSOR FORDYCE BARKER. Dr. Barker was heartily applauded as he came forward. He said:

*Mr. President, Brethren of the Medical Profession: Fellow-Citizens*—When I was asked to speak this evening I absolutely declined, because I then recalled to my mind a

sermon which I once heard. Many years ago, when in Edinburgh, I went to hear a clergyman, who was then the most celebrated preacher in that city. He announced his text, repeating it twice, in a clear, ringing voice, with a very marked Scotch accent—"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (Applause.) I subsequently reflected that on this occasion and in this battle the united voice of the whole profession of all schools in this city will give forth no uncertain sound, and that under the circumstances I owe it both to the profession and the public, who have been so kind to me, to at least breathe forth my hearty accord with the purpose of this meeting. This is the first time that the profession of this city has come together as a body for the purpose of awakening the public to the urgent necessity of taking active and efficient measures to arrest those causes of disease which bring upon so large a portion of our population discomfort, suffering, and pain, and the unnecessary sacrifice of so many lives—would it be an exaggeration to say the absolute murder of some thousands?—annually in this city. We have also come together to unite with all friends of sanitary reform in a demonstration which, it is to be hoped, will convince all the honest, honorable members of our Legislature who have either the public good at heart or any regard for their own personal reputations, that this city is now moved by a spirit not the result of passion, excitement, or false alarms, but founded on the conviction which results from proved facts that cannot be disputed, that property, health and life have for a long time been recklessly, wantonly and criminally perilled by the neglect of our law-makers and our law executors, and that we, the people of this city, will no longer submit to this. (Applause.) We intend to show, and if necessary we will demonstrate hereafter, that those who throw up barriers to obstruct such wise and efficient legislation as is necessary to protect us from those perils to which we have so long been exposed, shall be crushed and buried with odium and disgrace by an indignant people. In addition to the fact that the profession know better than any



others the actual condition of our streets, there is another reason, of a painful character, why the profession now feel it to be their duty to speak out plainly.

One of the most important Assembly districts of this city has for several years been represented by a man whose training and education secured for him the title he now bears, which implies the requisite acquirements necessary for the active duties of a profession devoted to the prevention of disease, the relief of pain and physical suffering, and the preservation of life. A man who had received such an education and who represented such a district, it was naturally supposed, would be the most influential and potential supporter of a bill drawn up with the greatest care by men of ability and wisdom, who command the confidence and respect of all political parties—a bill which, in the judgment of all whose opinions are unbiased by selfish political partisanship, and who must be as competent to form a wise opinion as any of those who have won a most unenviable notoriety by their active opposition and obstruction of its passage. Can the profession remain silent when such a man is proved, by testimony which never will be questioned by this community, to have been at first the pretended friend, and then, throwing off the mask, sinking all sense of honor, self-respect and duty, betraying the trusts which had been reposed in him, deliberately neglects to present a petition which had been confided to him, signed by two hundred and fifty of the profession whose names are well known in this city—a petition which, I undertake to say, would have been signed by one thousand if there had been the time to give them the opportunity to do so? (Loud applause.) Subsequently this same man refused to return this petition to those gentlemen who carried it to Albany, on the absurd ground that it—which by his treachery had never been presented to the Legislature—belonged to the archives of the Legislature. (Hisses.) This man will learn that the profession of this city will not quietly submit to such a slap in the face. “Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed, that he is grown



so great" as to refuse the right of petition, as he practically has, to any two hundred and fifty men who choose to send one to our Legislature? (Applause.) In early life this man had a landable ambition to win an honorable fame as an explorer in the Arctic region. Now, he seems to be making a rapid voyage of discovery to another place, the name of which, according to the poet, may not be mentioned before ears polite, but which is generally supposed to have a temperature quite the reverse of the Arctic regions, and he seems desirous of leaving us in a purgatory which does not purify. (Laughter.) Now, he does not appear to have even the ambition of a notorious character who is reported to think it better to reign in hell than serve in heaven, and he is content to train as a private under very poor devils as drill-masters. (Prolonged laughter and applause.)

I beg to allude briefly to one other point having an important bearing on the matter now before us. It has been a cause of congratulation with all thinking, educated men who know that free governments, republican institutions and universal suffrage are yet on trial as unsolved problems, that young men of culture, of good family names, and of independent means, are being brought forward by both of the great political parties, and are receiving that practical training which can only come from experience and make them wise and useful legislators. All must admire and respect loyalty and devotion to party when based on principle, as bearing on questions of statesmanship, questions of finance, and questions of administrative policy. But when the question is one of public safety, of prevention of disease, of preservation of life—when all good men of both parties are in agreement, how deplorable it is to see such young men forget their duty to themselves and to all who love them, sink all manliness, sacrifice truth and honor, and become slaves of party hacks, who make a trade of politics! (Applause.) They have apparently forgotten the first sentence of Cicero in his oration against Catiline, which is generally so vividly impressed upon all in the period of their early study of Latin.

They have evidently studied Tacitus with but little profit. It is most charitable to suppose that they have been captivated by the specious argument that the bill passed by the Senate involves the gain or loss of ten thousand votes, for this is the sole argument which in reality influences the votes against the bill. When sifted, what does this argument mean? It means that we are to be put under the government of these ten thousand voters, of the class that we see in the streets leaning on broom-handles, contemplating with serene complacency the heaps of filth and dust under their noses. Those whose votes are influenced by such arguments place themselves on the same level as this class, for they do not clean the streets, and they vote for the same reasons—namely, only to receive or retain a place for themselves. I know it to be the conviction of a large class who are called silent voters, that the party which seeks to secure ten thousand votes by such means will meet with more than a counterbalancing loss of the votes of those who have a vital interest in a good government. For my part, I have confidence, full and abiding, in the good sense and the intelligence of the people. I still have faith in our republican institutions. I believe that a movement has now begun, which may in the lifetime of the younger part of this audience bring about a kind of millennium for this city, when it will have such a perfection in the Street-cleaning Department, the Health Department, the Police Department, and all the other departments, as we now apparently have in our Post-Office and our Fire Department.

The Chairman then called upon Dr. WILLIAM H. DRAPER.

Dr. Draper said :

*Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen*—Having said what I had to say upon the important subject that has called us here together, at the citizens' meeting last night, I am somewhat re-

luctant to say anything more ; and I would not, but that I appear here to-night with the rest of you in what I may call the capacity of a consulting doctor. For this large gathering of doctors here is a consultation, and a consultation which betokens a very serious case. (Applause.) The attending physician in this case, I think, may be said to be Dr. Hayes (hisses and laughter); and, as is usual in all consultations, the attending physician is expected to state the case. Now, what does Dr. Hayes state this case to be? Simply this: that the vital interests of the public health are to be made to pay tribute to the maintenance of political power. (Hisses.) This is the case that has called this consultation. Bulwer says in one of his novels, in defining a medical consultation, that it is a meeting of physicians in which the counsellors agree with the attending physician and change the treatment. (Laughter and applause.) Now, in this case we do not propose to agree with the attending physician, and we do propose to change the treatment. (Applause.) The case, as you must feel, is a serious one when it demands a consultation of all the physicians in New York, and it is very evident that the fears of the public have been very grievously excited by its malady, and very justly excited. But I think I may say that, where such a number of physicians agree upon the treatment, the patient may consider himself safe. It is, however, only when there is unanimity that I think there may be safety in a multitude of counsellors; for when doctors disagree the patient is often sacrificed. Now, I presume the public would like to know what the doctors prescribe in this case. I think we will agree on this point: that it would be well for the public if they called upon the doctors oftener as sanitarians, and if they did not regard the doctor under the old traditional delusion as simply a curer of diseases.

This delusion prevails to a very great extent, and frequently the doctor is not called to advise until his opinion is absolutely worthless. I think that public opinion on this

point should undergo a change, and one good result would be that the public would regard the doctors as sanitarians who would teach them how to preserve health instead of being obliged to confine themselves to what is so often the disappointing labor of attempting to cure disease. There is another point in this connection—which is not exactly relevant to the subject which has brought us together, but which is still worth mentioning—that doctors would be excellent coadjutors in the administration of all institutions for the care of the sick. I believe the public would be amazed to know how jealous the boards of managers are of the interference of the doctor in their administration. It is part of that blunder which the public makes in calling doctors only to cure disease. Now, gentlemen, I believe that the consultation in this case would be unanimous on another point—that is, that a surgical operation is necessary (laughter); and this surgical operation consists in the amputation of the privilege of legislating for the public health from the Legislature at Albany. (Applause.) Look at the constitution of the Legislature, gentlemen, and tell me if you think it is competent to legislate for the city of New York. (Cries of “No! No!”) Who are they? Gentlemen who come from the country, from salubrious regions where they breathe pure air and eat simple and wholesome food. What do they know about the perils that environ us in this cosmopolitan city? I do not blame them much, for they have had no experience upon this point. Then, in view of our past experience, is it safe to trust the gentlemen whom we send there from the city to represent us, with such vital questions as the public health? What do they know about it? They are worse than the gentlemen from the country. They all know about dirt in its relation to politics—(laughter)—but they know nothing of how disease is bred from filth. I believe that, upon all questions relating to the public health, this city should be allowed to legislate for itself.

The Chairman: Gentlemen, I have the pleasure of introducing to you DR. E. G. LORING.

Dr. Loring said : *Mr. Chairman*—In response to the invitation with which your committee have honored me, I have come before the meeting to-night to state as briefly as possible my opinion as to the deleterious effect which the unclean streets have upon the health of the community, and to answer some of the questions which have already been put to me as to the facts upon which my convictions are based. I should have hesitated in doing this had not the word gone forth—not loud indeed, but still audible—that we physicians were exaggerating the matter and unduly alarming the people, and if one paper had not already appeared in a scientific journal, written on the side of the non-reformers—even if it was not directly dictated, as is commonly suspected, in their interests and for party purposes.

And even under these conditions I should not have consented to have taken the time to-night which would have been more eloquently, if not more profitably, occupied by others, had it not been that that branch of medicine to which I particularly devote my attention offered a conspicuous, perhaps the most conspicuous, example of the evil effects of the contact of irritating substances, of any organ in the body.

As I am speaking to medical men, it will hardly be necessary for me to remind you that the mucous membrane of the eye is one of the most susceptible to the irritating influence of noxious and poisonous particles, especially if these be of a putrescent character. This is a general assertion which I feel sure will be endorsed by the great majority of my hearers. Still, it will not do to exaggerate the matter, as I should be met at the outset by the counter-statement, from those who have looked into the subject in a cursory way and who would speak from interested motives, that the general assertion that the eye is so susceptible is not founded upon fact; that it can be readily shown that there are large bodies of men and women who work with impunity in factories where they are constantly subjected to the fumes of sulphuric, nitric and osmic acids; and that there are other large bodies

of people who work in tobacco factories and in other countless occupations which necessitate an atmosphere laden with irritating particles, without experiencing any injurious results.

On the surface it must be admitted that this is a strong argument to show that the evil effects of even the most irritating substances have been, so far as the eye is concerned, much exaggerated; and if this is so, then the ordinary dust of the street, no matter in what quantity it occurs, must be comparatively harmless. This argument and all similar ones are as fallacious as they are plausible. For, while it is perfectly true that many do acquire an immunity from the evil effects of the atmosphere of these various trades and occupations, and that men and women grow old in them without having suffered in the slightest degree from their eyes, and while it is true also that these people will insist that their calling, so far from being insalubrious, is on the contrary a remarkably healthy one, it is on the other hand equally true that those observers who are so fond of collecting such statistics take no consideration whatever of the multitude of those who have entered these occupations and been forced to leave them, with constitutions shattered for life. Then, too, the conditions are not the same; for it is one thing for a mucous membrane to become accustomed to an ordinary, or even an acrid dust or pungent acid, no matter how irritating these may be, and quite another for it to withstand the blood-poisoning effects of putrid germinating matter.

I shall be told, too, by those whose interest it is to take an opposite point of view of this subject, that we are living in what may be fairly called a catarrhal cycle; that New York is not the only place in which these affections exist; that they have prevailed for the past year or two all over Europe and all along our own seaboard; that cleanly Boston suffers as well from an increased amount of this disease as does filthy New York.

I shall be told, finally, that there are other influences that are creating the trouble, and that it is well enough to talk in



a general way to laymen and patients about the deleterious effects of the dust of the streets, but that, to satisfy the critical and cool judgment of my professional brethren, I must adduce some stronger evidence than mere assertion and general opinion based on insufficient data.

No one knows better than I that there is at present a catarrhal condition in the atmosphere, and no one more readily admits the evil effects of bad ventilation, bad light, bad drainage, and insufficient water-supply; but at the same time no one is more thoroughly convinced than I that there is still another cause which is more actively at work here in New York than in any other city in the world, and that is, the mess of polluted dust and finely divided filth in the streets.

To argue this matter in its fullest and most convincing way would lead me altogether too far; but, fortunately, I think the bare statement of one or two facts will be sufficient.

1st. There are the assertions of the patients themselves. For when an intelligent and educated man comes to the physician with the story that he was caught in a whirlwind of dust, and that his eyes felt full of grit and painful ever since, and when particles of dust are found imbedded in the mucous membrane or on the cornea of the eye, and when all traces of the irritation subside on the removal of the irritating substance, it is proof positive that the dust was the cause of the trouble. Nor to any candid mind is the proof any less convincing when, with precisely the same history, no actual foreign substance is found, but only the resulting irritation and disease, which may continue for years.

Scores of such cases are now occurring daily.

2d. That the disease is more frequently confined to one eye for a longer period before passing to the other eye, than where the trouble is occasioned simply by atmospheric influences.

3d. The characteristics of the disease; for, whereas the ordinary catarrhal type is intensified by the dust, there is an especial form caused by this which has individual features of its own, two prominent ones of which are mildness of the

inflammatory condition with disproportionate intolerance of light, and this is especially true when the trouble has arisen, not so much from the entrance of irritating substances at any time as when it is due to the accumulative effect of the daily and prolonged sojourn in a vitiated air.

4th. The course the disease runs: its intractability to treatment so long as the patient remains in the city; its speedy cure in a great majority of cases as soon as the sufferer gets into a pure atmosphere, even if it be at a short distance away, and the speedy return of the trouble the moment he comes back to New York again.

Such are some of the facts, though by no means all, which have induced me to believe that there is a specific cause for the creation of the disease in the condition and contents of the streets.

Now, one word in regard to the effect of all this. It will be said, perhaps, that as the causes have been exaggerated, so too have been the effects, and that inasmuch as I myself have admitted that one of the forms of the disease now most prevalent is of the mildest type, it is hardly worth while to make such an ado about it. My answer to this is that I have known many business and professional men in active employment obliged to leave their occupations and take refuge for a longer or shorter period in some pure and non-catarhal atmosphere. I have known skilled mechanics in numbers forced to leave well-paying positions, and poor sewing-girls, whose only chance of a decent maintenance was gained by extra work under artificial light, driven to the verge of starvation by the very condition of the eyes now under consideration; and if I were asked which of all the troubles of the eye had entailed most misery and most pecuniary loss to the inhabitants of this city during the past year, I should without hesitation reply that it was precisely this mild and intractable complaint, one of the most potent causes of which I believe to be the filthy condition of the streets.

Let no one flatter himself that because one form of the present epidemic is comparatively mild in type, that it will



always continue so, for if the present filth goes on accumulating as it has for the past year, then in some not very distant day, under our summer sun, which is an Egyptian sun, we shall then have all the horrors of an Egyptian ophthalmia.

The Chairman: Gentlemen I call upon DR. ALFRED L. LOOMIS.

Dr. Loomis spoke as follows:

"At the citizens' meeting which was held at Cooper Institute a few weeks since, I had the honor to send in a series of resolutions which had been adopted by the Academy of Medicine, calling attention to the filthy condition of our streets and the dangers threatening us therefrom. I stated that the masses of animal and vegetable decomposition in our streets favored the development of infectious diseases, and that, if they were allowed to lie until the summer's sun fell upon them, some grave form of epidemic disease would sweep over our city. I wish now to call attention to another danger. I refer to the dust-laden atmosphere which we, as citizens of this city, are compelled to breathe—an atmosphere charged not with dust merely, but with dust that is laden with the products of animal and vegetable decomposition. It is a fact which cannot be questioned, that organic substances—whether the gaseous products of putrefaction, or the microscopic germs which float in the atmosphere—when they are received into our bronchial tubes, are capable of exciting the most dangerous forms of disease. Every physician knows this. Every physician knows that diseases of the lungs are caused by and aggravated by these poisonous particles. How many confirmed consumptives can go back to the cause of their disease and find it in the poisonous dust of New York! How many who are in the first stages of this dreadful scourge, and who owe it to the poison they have taken into their systems here! How many have been compelled to leave the city within the past few months, because this atmosphere caused more than usual bronchial irritation—because the air we are all compelled to breathe is laden with

decomposing substances! How many business men have been compelled to give up lucrative positions here, and how many working-men have been driven away; and, worse than all, how many poor working-women there are who have been poisoned by the air of New York! (Applause.) There can be no question but the air in the city to-day—or any day when the rain is not falling upon us—is charged with these putrefactive materials, which, when we receive them into our lungs, are exciting diseases which, though slow in their progress, nevertheless are deadly. (Applause.) If a pestilence were walking in our streets to-day, do you believe that the Legislature would dare to trifle with your petitions? (Cries of “No!” and applause.) Yet noxious agents in the air you breathe are exciting diseased processes which will fill more graves than an epidemic of cholera, and yet they stand and laugh us in the face and tell us we are alarmists! (Cries of “Shame!”) These are facts which every one of you know. They have been repeated again and again in your observations.

Typhus fever is among us. You, fellow-citizens, who do not know what typhus fever is, who have not seen this terrible disease, do not tremble when you hear the word. But he who has known typhus fever in all its malignity—the experienced physician—can tell you that of all the contagious diseases it is the most contagious and the most fatal. We are told by these politicians that it is only a mild epidemic—that the cases are very few and very mild, and that the disease is easily overcome. But what is the record on this subject? Three weeks ago only a few cases were known. Now there are over one hundred cases of this dread disease in the City Fever Hospital. And this typhus fever is making its appearance, not only in the down-town streets—the dirty streets of the east side—the tenement-house quarters—but in Madison Square. You may say to yourself, ‘Oh, I live uptown; typhus fever will not get here; the neighborhood is healthy, and the streets are not so dirty as down-town.’ But I say that, unless thorough cleanliness comes in and we have the

favoring breezes of heaven upon us, this contagion will force its way into your dwelling, no matter where you may live in New York. (Applause.) You are liable to contract it on every side. We mean business. (Applause.) We do not come here to destroy any man's character; but, citizens of New York, we come here to arouse you, that you may protect yourselves. (Applause.) You have been asked to place this street-cleaning matter in the hands of the Health Department. We protest against that. (Applause.) Not only because the Health Department has shown itself inefficient in this matter, but because they are a political organization—(applause)—and as a political organization they can be throttled by the machine. (Great applause.) Do you ask for proofs that they are inefficient? Permit me to read you an extract from the law under which this health board was organized.

The speaker here read the portion of the Act of 1873 in which it is stated that the Inspector of Street-cleaning is required to perform such additional street-cleaning as, in the opinion of the Board of Health, is necessary to keep the streets and avenues of the city in a clean and healthful condition.

Have they done this? (Cries of "No! No!") Now, where did the alarm come from when your streets became reeking with the filth that will breed disease? Not from the Board of Health. (Cries of "No!" and applause.) No; it came from the New York Academy of Medicine. It came from the great body of the physicians of this city. It came from the people, where reforms always begin. (Applause.) The Board of Health is a partisan organization. No, fellow-citizens, we must take all sanitary matters out of politics. (Great applause.) The cleaning of our streets must be raised above politics. So long as politics have anything to do with it, the machine can throttle us at any day. (Applause.) Again, as a member of the medical profession, if I can only arouse the

citizens of New York in this matter, if I can only make you realize the dangers that threaten, no such men as Dr. Hayes will dare resist you. (Hisses and applause.) You are not yet aroused sufficiently in this matter. When typhus fever shall become epidemic and the Mayor shall have to proclaim that the city is in a state of epidemic, then see where the business men of New York will be. But then it will be too late. You will be shut off in your commercial relations, for merchants will not come to a city of pestilence; and worse, you will feel it in your homes. You will find that typhus fever has preceded more than one great epidemic—the cholera, the plague in London, and in other cases of pestilence that could be cited. I urge you again to arouse in this matter. Let not only your legislators, but the men who run the machine, know that you mean business.

The orator took his seat amid a round of tremendous and deafening applause, which was repeated again and again. He came forward and bowed, but this did not seem to satisfy the audience, who were apparently carried away by the manner as much as the words of the speaker, who had delivered his address with earnest and impassioned utterances. In response to continued demands, Professor Loomis rose once more and said:

I have already received the name of "The Street-cleaning Doctor." I hope and mean to reserve it. If I may do something to carry this bill through the Legislature, so that we may try the man who promises so well—I mean the Mayor of New York—I shall have accomplished all I desire.

The Chairman: I call upon a prominent member of the Committee on Hygiene, DR. JOHN C. PETERS.

Dr. Peters said:

*Mr. President and Gentlemen*—I have been asked to say something about the condition of the meats exposed in the poorer parts of the city, to the fast and vile accumulations of filth which encumber our streets. I had often noticed their unsavory look, but first made more special examinations last

fall. Some of these meats were hanging directly over the filthy gutters, suspended from hooks attached to awning-posts ; and in some places there were huge piles of ashes, garbage, filth, slops, several feet high, and directly underneath them.

I knew very well that in 1874 the Board of Health had drawn attention to the injury done to fresh and wholesome meats from the mere exposure to the filth of streets when driven to market from the slaughter-houses in open carts. I was also well aware that many cases of disease and death had been reported by Professor Taylor, Letheby, Health Officer of London, Professor Gamgee, and others, and that some of these cases of meat-poisoning had taken place in very cold weather, viz., in December. The outbreak of winter cholera this year again called my attention to this subject. I am disposed to believe that the injury to the meat is done by its being frequently covered with filthy street-dust, its saturation with the exhalations from the loathsome streets and gutters during the day, and its removal to more or less warm shops at night.

Although the principal blame for the vile condition of the streets must always fall upon the Street-cleaning Department, still I had long known that the Board of Health had ordinances which have all the force of laws, prohibiting the throwing of slops and garbage in the streets, and that it had the authority to order additional street-cleaning, if that of the Police Department was unsatisfactory.

The Committee on Hygiene had long been in communication with one of the principal medical officers of the Board of Health, and had often pleaded for his hearty co-operation with the endeavor to have the streets better cleaned, and the diseases arising from their filthy condition abated. We received for answer: "That, both for æsthetic and sanitary reasons, the streets should be kept clean. But what share the condition of the streets has in the production or in the fatality of special forms of disease, is a question difficult to state with accuracy."

We were also told that "it would not be wise to claim that



the filthy condition of the streets renders small-pox, scarlet-fever [and hence also kindred diseases like typhus], liable to greater fatality."

When we claimed that the vile dust and loathsome exhalation of the streets and gutters, when inhaled into the air-tubes and lungs, increased the frequency, severity, and mortality of bronchitis, consumption, and pneumonia, we were informed "that there were other causes of these diseases than dirty streets."

When we claimed that diphtheria prevailed most in dirty places, and pure air was necessary for its prevention and cure, we were informed "that Brooklyn had cleaner streets than New York, and more diphtheria;" whereas it is well known that the cleaner parts of Brooklyn and New York are comparatively free from diphtheria, while the dirty portions of both cities are not.

The only point on which there was a partial agreement of opinion between the committee and the health officer was that "New York suffers more especially from diarrhoeal diseases, which are intensified by filth-decomposition, dirty streets, and foul gutters, which help to produce this class of diseases and prevent their cure."

"It has also always been maintained by the Board of Health of this city that the (vile) odors, so often complained of by our citizens (to be from the streets?), *were not* detrimental to health, but only destructive of comfort."

The Health Board have always held that the trades classed as offensive constitute an important part of the industries of this great city, and their banishment would strike a terrible blow at her commercial prosperity, while the committee have always maintained that these offensive trades drove out more and a better class of business than it brought to the city, and greatly injured the value of much property in the neighborhood, and that the Board of Health was established to protect the health of the city at all hazards, and not the business interests of a few large nuisance-makers.

## DR. ROOSA'S REMARKS.

Dr. D. B. ST. JOHN ROOSA offered the following resolutions for the consideration of the meeting, and prefaced them by the following remarks.

*Mr. President, Fellow-Members of the Medical Profession, and Fellow-Citizens*—I have longed to see this day for ten years. I have hoped that the plain things that were said last night at Steinway Hall would be said, as they have been, on a public platform. I wish to give you, with your permission, a little of my personal experience at Albany as a lobbyist for the Citizens' bill. I would that I had the eloquence of a Choate, that I might picture that scene in the lower house—*lower* in two senses of the word—when the debate was going on which finally terminated in a vote against cleaning the streets. I saw there Alderman Biglin and others arrayed against the conspirators of the Committee of Twenty-one. I saw Dr. Hayes, not in his seat, but flitting about among the reporters to escape the men whose petition he had refused to present, after promising to do so, as well as to vote for the bill which he voted against. I saw those legislators refusing to do their duty, but preferring to "sing themselves away to everlasting bliss." As I saw these ward statesmen there, I wondered whether they were to secure some great good to their districts, or to carry out the bidding of their superiors. I thought that perhaps the wire that communicated with them went as far as Washington. Perhaps it did; who can say? Some people ask, Why not accept the Carpenter bill, the Sag Harbor bill? Because it gives the power of confirmation to the Board of Health, and the power of removal to the Governor, and the power of annulling contracts to the Supreme Court, and thus defeats our object of efficiency.

Mr. George Bliss, who is high authority on sanitary matters, has answered Dr. Loomis before he spoke, and Mr. Bliss says we are in no danger of an epidemic, and that Captain Williams has just begun his spring cleaning. If he saw

Twenty-sixth street as I saw it to-day, with its piles of filth, he would say, With such a beginning what must the end be? The Board of Health should have nothing to do with this business. They have done nothing in the past to justify their being placed in such a position of trust. The health officer of the port is a member of that board. Undoubtedly he is the author of a number of valuable essays on epidemics and yellow fever, but unfortunately you and I have not seen his medical works. But I am told, on good authority, that he is a valuable worker of the political machine in Alleghany County. As to Mr. French, I refer you to Mr. Jackson S. Schultz and his speech of last evening. The president is a chemist, a professor in two colleges, and has a double chair in one. He certainly has enough to do. The other member of the board, a distinguished physician, whom we all delight to honor, was unfortunately quoted by Speaker Sharpe as denying that our filthy streets were doing much harm. No! we must have an undivided responsibility in this matter. An eminent police surgeon says that much of our increased mortality is caused by refrigerators. Think of it; there is a refrigerator in every house! General Sharpe, whose plume was conspicuous in many a fight in the late war, will not gain as much credit from his late leadership as he did then. I heard him say, that if New York City was left to govern itself, "God help her!" If she is left to herself, God will help her; the Devil helps her now. We must separate politics from the Street-cleaning Bureau and the Board of Health. We must cease to be governed by the man from Cattaraugus, or the man from St. Lawrence, or the men who are owned by any one man. We must take the position of that great reformer who said: "I will not equivocate; I will not retreat one inch; I will be heard."

Dr. Roosa then offered the resolutions:

The medical profession of the city of New York, in mass meeting assembled, do resolve and declare:

That the garbage and the filth, the necessary accumulations of traffic and of households in this great metropolis, have not been thoroughly removed from the streets of our city for a number of years.



*Resolved*, That this condition of things produces disease, renders a simple type of it malignant and dangerous, and acts injuriously in the following ways :

*First*.—Meat and other food exposed for sale are poisoned by the exhalations from the filth.

*Second*.—The air-boxes of our houses convey a poisoned atmosphere.

*Third*.—The heavy rains and snow bring into solution the accumulations at the mouths of obstructed culverts, and aggregate and intensify morbid agencies.

*Fourth*.—The irritating and poisonous dust from excrementitious substances and filth is of the greatest damage to the eyes and the air-passages.

*Fifth*.—Malaria is created and fostered by the reeking sewers and gutters.

*Sixth*.—The difficulties of maintaining cleanliness in the houses and in the persons of our inhabitants are greatly increased.

*Seventh*.—Persons are so disabled by living in the midst of these injurious influences that many are compelled to seek frequent changes of climate.

*Eighth*.—The children of the poor who live in tenement-houses, under bad sanitary conditions, and attend school in crowded schoolhouses, have as their only playground the streets in which these accumulations from dwellings and from animals are producing their injurious effects.

*Resolved*, That one of the causes of the increased mortality in this city during the last winter—a mortality which places its death-rate, despite our natural advantages of position, among the highest in this country—has been neglect in removing the accumulations aforementioned.

*Resolved*, That the methods heretofore adopted by the Police Department of the city have been notoriously bad, and even those methods have been inefficiently carried out. Party politics has been made to enter into what should be a purely sanitary duty performed by a responsible officer.

*Resolved*, That the Health Board of this city, the appointed guardians of the public sanitary condition, in its political environment and composition, have been found to be apologists rather than denunciators of the neglect and inefficiency which have produced the frightful condition of our highways, and the noxious vapors which have entered our houses during the last few months.

*Resolved*, That, in view of these facts, and also in view of the fact that a petition signed by more than two hundred and fifty physicians of this city, and sent to our representatives, has never been fully placed before the Legislature, and our sacred right to direct the sanitary legislation of the city has been disregarded, we again, in mass meeting assembled, protest against the recent action of the Assembly in refusing to pass the Citizens' bill as it came unanimously from the Senate, and now demand of our representatives from this city that they shall reverse their action and assist in passing this bill, which is demanded by the intelligence and honesty of this metropolis.

*Resolved*, That we deny the right of politicians to decide matters pertaining to the health of the State by claims upon party fealty, and that we pro-

test against the policy which subjects the health and welfare of our citizens to the behests of party leaders, however exalted their position.

*Resolved*, That we decline to support at any future election any representative from the city of New York who shall disobey the requests of our citizens upon this subject.

*Resolved*, That we invoke the aid of our professional brethren throughout the State, by their influence upon their representatives, in securing the reforms we demand.

The Chairman: are these Resolutions seconded?

DR. SAYRE said:

*Mr. President*—I move the adoption of the resolutions, and I sincerely hope they will pass by a unanimous vote. When I look around me, sir, I behold a sight such as was never before witnessed in the civilized world—or, at least, history gives us no evidence of any such gathering. As Dr. Draper has very properly remarked, it is the *largest consultation* of doctors ever known.

This immense hall, packed to its utmost capacity by the intelligent physicians of the city—who are taken from their duties to the sick and dying, who need their constant care and attention, and are compelled to neglect this duty and come here to perform a still greater one, namely, to combine as citizens of this great metropolis to use their united influence in preventing the innocent citizens from being *murdered* by those in official station, and who have been placed in their official position by the very people themselves.

I know, sir, that murder is a very strong term to use; but it is perfectly justifiable, and there is no other that accurately express the facts.

Every death the result of disease that *could be prevented* is an unnecessary sacrifice of life. Whether the death comes from the assassin's dagger, or the inhalation of poisoned air caused by the neglect of duty of those in official station, the guilt is equally great.

The assassin who stabs you in the dark is despised by all men, and if caught is properly punished.

The highwayman who demands your money or your life, gives you some slight chance of self-defence, for you may be

quick enough to blow his brains out before he gets an opportunity to kill you.

But when you have paid large salaries to officials for the very purpose of protecting you against the danger of being poisoned, you trust in a fancied security, which, if they fail to do their duty, destroys your life while you have no chance to protect yourself, thus placing their guilt far beyond that of the assassin or highwayman.

And, sir, they dare to add to this infamy by robbing us of the *sacred right of petition*; for when two hundred and fifty of the most reputable physicians of this city send a petition to the Legislature to ask redress for our grievances, our representative, Dr. Hayes, suppresses the same; and he is reported in the journals as insolently asserting that, if ever there was a scheme born in deceit, entered into in iniquity, and pressed with the cunning and persistency of the devil, it was this Senate Street-cleaning bill.

He thus not only slanders the most reputable citizens of the metropolis, but dares to rob them of the most sacred right of freemen—that of petition, thus placing them beneath the position formerly occupied by slaves; for many years ago, when John Quincy Adams was flooding the Senate Chamber with petitions for the abolition of slavery, a monster petition was also sent to him from the slaves themselves. The question then arose whether the petition could be received from the slaves, as they were not citizens, when Henry A. Wise, a Virginian and a slaveholder, arose in his place, and said, “Mr. President, I am a slaveholder, and often and again have my slaves petitioned me, and never yet in vain;” and the petition was then admitted. Are we to be treated worse than the slaves?

Sir, look at the natural advantages of this city: a long, narrow strip of land between two broad and rapid rivers, with a high, rocky ridge through its entire centre, sloping off to these two swiftly flowing streams, with the beautiful bay in front, and the Harlem River in the rear, with a six-foot tide-fall twice in every twenty-four hours, gives natural

advantages for drainage and health unequalled by any city on the face of the globe. And yet our death-rate is far greater than many other cities which have not our natural advantages; and it must, therefore, be the result of our neglect. We have tried various means, by different commissions, to remedy the evil, but all of no avail, and when we complain, we can find *no one responsible* for the crime. We therefore propose to enact a law by which the Mayor—whom we can reach if he is derelict in the discharge of his duty—shall be responsible. I therefore move you the adoption of the resolutions.

The Chairman: Before putting the resolutions to a vote, I call on PROF. J. C. DALTON.

Dr. Dalton said:

*Mr. Chairman*—Does it not seem extraordinary that it needs a mass meeting of the medical profession in this city to declare the fact that there is danger in uncleanness? This is a matter so plain, it is a lesson that has been taught so often, by epidemics which have swept through entire communities, at an enormous sacrifice of life and health, that there can be no excuse anywhere for ignorance or doubt in regard to it. We know that in some cases a very dear penalty is paid for very little neglect in this matter. The impurities of contagious disease may be small in quantity, but they can light up a fever or a pestilence that will run through families and towns and cities. When the emanations from a festering dung-heap or a foul gutter rise into the atmosphere, we do not know where they will go. But we know that wherever they do penetrate, they carry with them an insidious poison, and that no one is safe from it. The least contact with yellow fever secretions will reproduce the malady, and the bare touch of an infected garment will communicate the virus and the disease.

Now, these things are so familiar, that for any one of us to state them over again seems almost a useless repetition. And yet we are here to-night because it is perfectly evident that

we must sound the alarm for a peril that is tenfold more threatening and more palpable. It is no hidden lurking-place or dark corner of the city that we complain of now, where a few infinitesimal germs of contagion have concealed themselves. It needs no microscope or test-tube to detect our sources of infection. The piles of filth stand on our street pavements. They border the sidewalks and fill the gutters. They lean against the iron columns of the railroads; and when they are gradually disintegrated by the wind and wagon-wheels, and softened by the rains, they spread out over the thoroughfares in a revolting layer of organic slime. This offensive mixture of refuse and rubbish and animal excretions has been here before our eyes and under our feet for weeks and months, in a quantity and condition that is both degrading and deleterious to the last degree.

This is only saying what we all know and have known for a long time. No one can move about the city without seeing it; and no medical man can see it without knowing what it means. Go to the First avenue, where it borders on the great Charity Hospital of the city: you will not find there a cubic foot of the atmosphere that is not reeking now with the pulverized filth of last November. And it only needs a little scurrying wind to put any one of our avenues in the same condition. Let no one suppose that his own quarter of the town is exempt from interest in this matter. A city that is infected in a part is infected in the whole; and the dwellers on Murray Hill cannot consider themselves safe because the main accumulations of filth are out of sight, a few blocks to the eastward or westward.

Sir, it is not too much to say that this is a beleaguered city. It is not enough to say so. That would mean that a line of foes had encircled its environs, and were awaiting a chance to get in. It is a great deal worse than that. They are in here now, and have been here since last year, every day adding to their numbers. They have been, all that time, and are now, sapping the health and strength of the community; and they are only waiting for one week of warm weather to rise



in such force that the contest with them may be a contest of life and death.

I believe that the medical profession would disregard its plain duty, if it did not speak on this question in terms which cannot be misunderstood. The danger from the present unwholesome condition of the city is a real one, and it is imminent. It should be averted promptly and thoroughly. The process of street-cleaning, as now performed, does not deserve the name. It is hardly a pretence. What method or system should be adopted by legislative means I do not undertake to say. But one thing is certain; it must be a system that will accomplish the work in a manner totally and radically different from that in which it is done now. I believe it is entirely possible to make this city clean from end to end, and to keep it so; and nothing less than that can protect it from infection and disease.

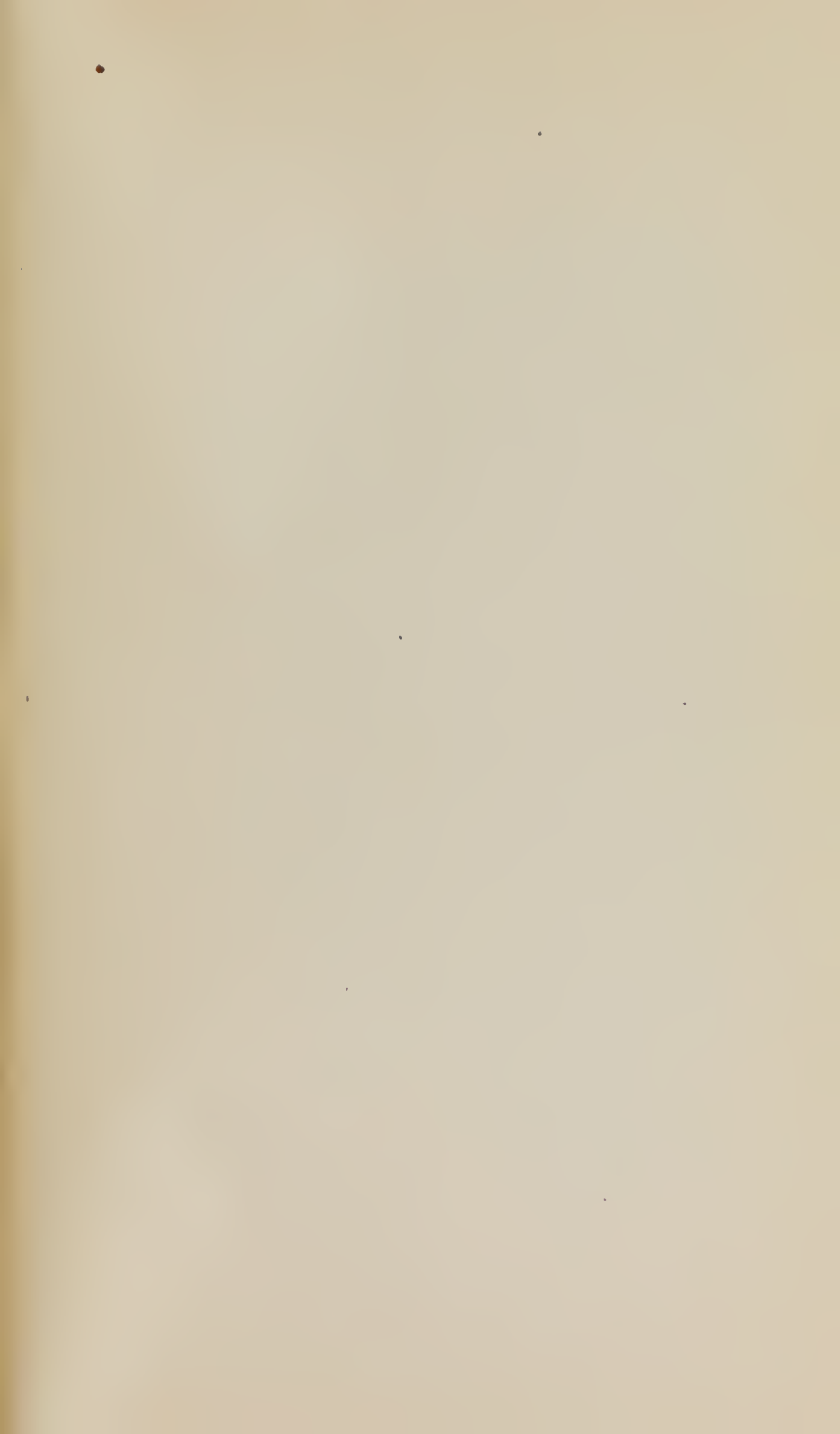
Mr. Chairman, I will occupy your time no longer. I am perfectly aware that I have said nothing which you did not already know; but I am indebted to the committee for an opportunity to express these views on a topic which I believe to be by far the most important thing which can now engage the attention of the inhabitants of this city.

DR. CHARLES CARROLL LEE then offered the following resolution as an addition to the preceding:

*Resolved*, That these resolutions, attested by the President and Secretary of this meeting, be sent to the Governor of the State, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the Assembly by a committee of five, to be appointed by this meeting.

This was unanimously accepted, and on motion of Dr. Lee the following gentlemen were appointed the special committee called for: Professor John C. Dalton, Willard Parker, jr., Allan McLane Hamilton, F. M. Weld, and Professor William H. Thomson.

Upon motion the meeting adjourned, subject to the call of the chairman.











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